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AUTHOR Stoicovy, Catherine E.
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ABSTRACT

A qualitative study examined the use of retelling as a culturally responsive strategy for Micronesian students. More specifically, it examined the effect of the retelling strategy on the literacy development of an 11-year-old Micronesian student from Chuuk over the course of 9 months in a fifth-grade Guam classroom. Results showed increases in the student's self confidence and in the quality and quantity of his reading and writing. Resultant changes in writing competency were documented through written retellings over the span of 9 months. (Contains a figure, 2 tables, and 35 references.) (NKA)

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Retelling as a Culturally Responsive Strategy for Micronesian Students: Eduard's Story.

by Catherine E. Stoicovy

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CS 217 196

Retelling as a Culturally Responsive Strategy for Micronesian Students: Eduard's Story

CATHERINE E. STOICOVY

[Back]

This is a qualitative study of the use of retelling as a culturally responsive strategy for Micronesian students. More specifically, the study examines the effect of the retelling strategy on the literacy development of an eleven year-old Micronesian student from Chuuk over the course of nine months in a fifth grade Guam classroom. The results of the study show increases in the student's self-confidence and in the quality and quantity of his reading and writing. Resultant changes in writing competency were documented through written retellings over the span of nine months.

Guam classrooms represent a diverse population of students from differing linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. An increasing number of students are from the Micronesian islands. According to Guam Department of Education figures for school year 1996-1997, Micronesians comprise approximately nine percent of the student population in the public schools. The majority of these students, over five percent, are from Chuuk. The question on the minds of many educators is "How can we facilitate literacy acquisition for our Micronesian students and where should we begin in the process?" One approach to answering this question is to examine the educational practices used in Guam's classrooms. Are these practices culturally responsive and academically effective for Micronesian students?

According to Au (1993) the use of culturally responsive instruction, or instruction consistent with the values of students' own cultures, can improve academic learning. The Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP) in Hawaii provides an example of how an educational program can be effective if it is compatible with the culture of the children it serves (Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987). KEEP was established over two decades ago as a research and development center to meet the educational needs of native Hawaiian children (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). These children, ethnic minority group speakers of Hawaiian Creole English, were not achieving well in school, particularly in reading (Au & Jordan, 1981). Efforts at the KEEP school have shown that with an approach that is culturally responsive, these children do learn to read. Co-narration, or "talk story," a familiar feature of the native Hawaiian storytelling tradition, was incorporated into reading lessons (Perogoy & Boyle, 1997). As a result, reading achievement scores increased and remained at national norm levels for over a decade (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). As a long-term research and development effort, in operation from 1971 to 1994, KEEP sought to bring about change in student achievement by helping public school teachers improve their effectiveness in literacy instruction (Au & Asam, 1996).

With regard to Micronesian students, are Guam teachers using strategies that are consistent with the values of students' cultures and aimed at improving academic learning? Micronesians come from an oral culture. "Oral discourse constitutes the sociolinguistic frame of island societies and is always an inherent characteristic of Micronesian languages even in written form" (Sachuo, 1992, p. 406). Fugelsang and Chandler (1986) explain that in a traditional oral society the emphasis is on the spoken or sung word. "The mouth is the home of words and the soul inhabits the breath. Meaning emanates from a human face and not from a blackboard or a sheet of paper " (p. 49). In oral societies stories are told to living audiences and remembered through their retellings rather than through reading and writing. "It is the eloquence of speech and one's imagination and memory that are rewarded" (Topping, 1987, p. 29).

Storytelling is a favorite pastime of the Chuukese people in Micronesia (A. Kojenlang, personal communication, October 15, 1997). Referred to as "tuttunap" by the islanders, storytelling is enjoyed by both young and old. It is not uncommon to find small groups of students nestled together under a coconut tree during recess time retelling stories. Legends, fables, and family stories come alive as the children take turns at retelling special tales passed down from their elders. Adults enjoy storytelling, too. Antelina Kojenlang, a Chuukese teacher and graduate student at the University of Guam, has fond memories of sharing her own family stories with adult members of the Chuukese community. Stories of family values such as obedience versus disobedience are frequently retold while adults perform community services delegated by the village chief.

Egan (1987) tells us that, "The process of enthralling the audience, of impressing upon them the reality of the story, is a central feature of education in oral cultures" (p. 451). However, when Micronesian students arrive on Guam they find themselves in a literate society that values learning from interaction with the printed word rather than by the familiar oral tradition. In the print-oriented environment of our schools, reading, spelling and writing skills are rewarded. "Stories are told through print; information storage is in the printed form as opposed to the memory storage of oral societies" (Topping, 1987, p.29). As a result of these differences, Micronesians might experience what Topping refers to as isolation and alienation from traditional oral sources and areas of knowledge.

How then should Guam educators facilitate reading and writing instruction for Micronesian students? It might best be approached by linking it to their strength in oracy. Since storytelling is an important part of Micronesian cultures, the retelling strategy may be a successful springboard for literacy acquisition. Retelling is a process whereby readers or listeners tell what they remember from a reading either orally or in writing or illustrations. Research suggests that oral retelling of what has been listened to or read results in increased comprehension and recall of discourse (Gambrell, Pfeiffer & Wilson, 1985). According to schema theory, comprehension is a matter of activating or constructing a schema that provides a coherent explanation of objects and events mentioned in a text (Anderson, 1994). Retelling provides a basis for comprehending, learning, and remembering the ideas in stories and texts. It also develops oral language complexity and provides a schema for story structure (Morrow, 1985). As students reconstruct text, they see how parts of the text interrelate and mesh with their own experiences to create meaning (Anderson, 1994; Gambrell, Pfeiffer & Wilson, 1985).

Retelling is a culturally responsive strategy that builds on the oral strengths that Micronesian students bring to the classroom. It can provide a scaffold in their literacy development by facilitating and supporting the transition to the printed word. This paper examines the effect of the retelling strategy on an eleven year-old Chuukese student over the course of nine months in a fifth-grade Guam classroom. More specifically, it addresses the following question: How can the use of retelling as a culturally responsive strategy improve the literacy development of a fifth-grade Micronesian student from Chuuk?

An In-depth Look at Retelling

This section presents the salient features of retelling and its benefits and forms, followed by a thorough discussion of the retelling procedure.

Retelling

Retelling is defined as postreading or postlistening recalls in which readers or listeners tell what they remember either orally or in writing or illustrations. Retellings of stories have been used for over 60 years to gather data in a wide range of language based inquiries (Kalmbach, 1986). Piaget (1926) used retellings to examine children's conceptions of time and Bartlett (1932) used retellings to study memory. Retellings of silent movies were utilized to study differences between oral and written language while Chafe (1980) and his associates used retellings of a silent movie to examine, among other things, the ways people from different cultures tell stories.

Retelling is an active procedure that involves children in the reconstruction of text and also allows interaction between adults and children (Morrow, 1985). Vygotsky's definition of higher mental functions as internalized social relationships suggests retelling is a social means of developing literacy (Vygotsky, 1978). Applying Vygotsky's theory, literacy appears to develop from children's social interactions with others in specific environments involving reading, writing, and oral language (Morrow, 1985). Rosenblatt (1988) also describes the social aspects of language:

> Language is a socially generated public system of communication. But it is often forgotten that language is always internalized by an individual human being in transaction with a particular environment. We know that words do not function in isolation, but always in particular verbal, personal, and social contexts. (p. 3)

The retelling procedure is an active strategy that, when used in all of its forms, requires social engagement as the participants are involved in reading, writing, talking and listening. The traditional language arts are involved in a collaborative way. Reading and talking are mutually supportive, and each is supported by, and supports, writing and listening (Brown & Cambourne, 1987).

Research suggests that verbal rehearsal of what has been read or listened to results in significant learning with respect to the comprehension and recall of discourse (Gambrell, Pfeiffer & Wilson, 1985). Their studies show that retelling encourages both integration and personalization of content, helping children see how parts of the text interrelate and how the text meshes with their own experiences. In a study by Morrow (1985), retelling was found to significantly improve story comprehension, sense of story structure, and oral language complexity when used with kindergarten children as a follow-up to listening to stories. Gambrell, Pfeiffer, and Wilson (1985) found that oral language opportunities that encourage children to talk about what they read appear to enhance reading comprehension. In their study, they reported that 4th graders who engaged in retelling as a follow-up to silent reading did better on comprehension tasks than students who produced illustrations. In another study, 4th grade students who engaged in retelling did as well on comprehension tasks (text based questions and retelling) as students who answered questions about the text (Gambrell, Koskinen & Kapinus, 1986). Both skilled and less skilled readers' comprehension of text improved significantly through retelling. After only four retelling experiences, students were more proficient in their free recall performance and in responding to both text explicit and text implicit questions about what they had read. According to Rose, Cundick, and Higbee (1984), retelling significantly increased the reading comprehension of elementary age learning disabled children. In a study conducted on Guam, students who were encouraged to talk and to organize their thoughts through retelling had the highest mean retelling score (Salas, 1991).

For assessment purposes, retelling can be a valuable diagnostic tool. Irwin & Mitchell (1991) and Lipson & Wixson (1997) have found that retelling reveals a wealth of information about a child's comprehension. It shows what a child comprehends, as well as how the child comprehends. It can reveal children's awareness of text structure, their language proficiency, and their ability to identify important aspects of the material. In addition, retellings are valuable in providing insights into children's metacognitive strategies. These are the strategies that readers "do consciously or unconsciously to understand what they are reading" (Irwin & Mitchell, 1991, p. 1). Retellings also give evidence of reader miscomprehension when students fail to understand.

Retellings can be used to measure a reader's or writer's strengths and weaknesses and to identify the kinds of reading materials and level of difficulty most appropriate for them. When used in a pre/post situation, retelling can also be used to measure growth in reading, oral language and writing. These measures show us what the child can do. This information is in contrast with many tests which point out what children cannot do.

Brown & Cambourne (1987) recommend that teachers start a retelling program with texts from traditional children's literature. Narratives such as fables, myths and fairy tales are already well known by most children. "They have a reasonable grasp of the stylistic features of these stories and therefore such prose provides a strong medium through which to explore and develop the re-creation of meaning by retelling" (p. 43).

General Forms of Retelling

There are many variations of the retelling procedure. Table 1 presents Brown and Cambourne's (1987) description of the general forms of the procedure.

TABLE 1

Forms of Retelling **Oral-to-Oral Retelling.**

Student listens to teacher tell or read aloud a text and then retells it orally. Can be used with non-readers or non-writers. Provides insights into learners' listening skills and/or their

degree of control over oral forms of the language.

Oral-to-Written Retelling. Student listens to teacher tell or read aloud a text and then retells it in writing. Can be used with both immature and mature readers/writers. Can also be used to gain insight into learners' listening skills and/or degrees of control over the written forms of language.

Oral-to-Drawing Retelling. Variation of oral-to-written retelling. Student listens to teacher tell or read aloud a text and then retells it by drawing. Can be used with non-readers/non-writers. If students are allowed to talk about their drawings, one can gain insight into their listening comprehension and control of oral language.

Written-to-Oral Retelling. Student reads a text and then retells it orally. Can be used with readers who have a difficulty with, or a fear of, writing (e.g. non-English speaking learners, and at-risk learners). Useful for gaining insight into reading comprehension and degrees of control over the oral forms of language.

Written-to-Written Retelling. Student reads a text and then retells it in writing. Can be used with learners who have some degree of control over reading and writing. Useful for gaining insight into the degree of reading power (i.e., comprehension) and control over the written forms of language.

Written-to-Drawing Retelling. Variation of written-to-written retelling. Student reads a text and retells it by drawing. Useful with learners who can read but have difficulty with, or a fear of, writing. If learners are encouraged to talk about their drawings, teachers can gain insight into reading comprehension and degree of control over oral language forms.

Source: Brown & Cambourne, 1987, pp. 28-29.

Retelling in a Fifth-grade Multicultural Classroom

My first attempt at using retellings was at the beginning of the year in September. As a diagnostic measure, I started with oral to written retelling to determine writing ability without the intervention of oral practice in retelling. The students did two written retellings of narrative text.

The first was a short story, "Sea Serpent" (Spellman, 1983). The second, written the following day, was a written retelling of the myth, "Medusa" (Spellman, 1983). I used these written retellings as a starting point to measure growth in literacy development. I told the children:

> Students, we are going to do something new. It's called retelling. Retelling is a good way to develop your storytelling and story writing skills and it is a good way to help you remember and understand what you read or what is read to you. I am going to read aloud a story (Sea Serpent) and I want you to listen carefully. As I read the story, I want you to listen for the important ideas and try to remember as much as you can about the story. When I finish reading aloud, you will write as much as you can remember about the story. This is called a written retelling.

After this diagnostic use of retelling, I followed the five steps recommended by Irwin and Mitchell (1991) for using retellings.

Step I: Teacher modeling

Teacher reads a story to children or children read a story silently. Teacher models retelling. I started with narrative text and modeled retelling to my students this way:

> Students, I am going to read aloud a fairy tale and then I'm going to retell the story to you. When I retell it, I'm going to try to include all the important ideas. As I read the story, I want you to listen for the important ideas.

At the end of the story I told the students, "Now, I'll retell the story to you without looking at my story. Listen to see if I include all the important ideas." At the end of the retelling I accepted the students' additions to my retelling. They added anything they felt that I had left out. Next, the students practiced retelling in small groups.

Step II: Small Group Oral Retelling

Small groups participate in retelling. Following the reading of the story, children take turns retelling. The listeners add information to the child's retelling. I explained group retelling this way:

> Students, please listen carefully to the story and try to keep the important ideas and events in mind so that you can retell it to your friends. Then take turns retelling the story. The listeners can add information about the story that reteller has left out.

When the groups seemed to have the idea of how to retell, they moved to Step III.

Step III: Partner Retelling

After reading the same text, two children participate in a retelling. The listener gives feedback. I explained partner retelling this way, "Students, now I want you to practice retelling in pairs. Take turns reading (orally or silently) and retelling the story. The listener adds anything important that the reteller has left out." The students used the same retelling steps to practice expository text. They retold text from their health, science and other content area textbooks. From partner retellings, the students moved into individual oral retellings.

Step IV: Individual Oral Retellings

Children retell individually to someone else or into a tape recorder. If the listener has not read the same text, then he only asks clarifying questions or gives comments. I told the students, "You're ready now for individual oral retellings. After reading the text, you can retell it to me or to friend. Or you can retell into the class tape recorder." From oral retellings, they made the transition to individual written retellings.

Step V: Individual Written Retellings

Students write everything they can remember about the text. I explained the step this way, "Students, at the end of your retelling practice, please find a comfortable place where you can write by yourself, without help from anyone else. Then write everything you can remember about the text." Students continued to engage in oral and written retelling practice throughout the school year.

The Case of Eduard

In order to reach a fuller understanding of the benefits of the retelling strategy as a culturally responsive strategy for Micronesian students, it is important to examine the progress of a student in my classroom. The following is an account of Eduard's literacy development over the course of nine months.

Background

Eduard, an eleven year-old Micronesian student, was born on Chuuk in June 1982. At the time of this study, he had lived on Guam for three years with his mother, also from Chuuk, and his Chamoru stepfather. Eduard's first language is Chuukese and both English and Chuukese are spoken at home. He had received no instruction in reading and writing in the Chuukese language. Eduard entered the Guam public school in his third grade year and was placed in the Teaching English to Students of Other Languages (TESOL) program. He was retained in grade three and his teacher recommended that he continue to receive TESOL services or be placed in Special Education. Eduard transferred to another public school to repeat his third grade year. Based on the results of the Language Assessment Scales, he was placed in the Language Other Than English (LOTE) program where he received English as a Second Language instruction for two hours a day. In his fourth grade year he attended a regular classroom throughout the day with special attention from the teacher for his language needs. Results of the Language Assessment Scales at the end of fourth grade showed that Eduard scored at a Level 5 Reading Placement, indicating that he no longer required the services of the LOTE program. It was recommended, however, that attention to Eduard's language and literacy needs continue to be given by the regular teacher.

Reading

Eduard entered my fifth grade class with below grade level reading skills. Results of the Basic Skills Mastery Test in May of his fourth grade year revealed that Eduard had mastered only three of the 25 subtests of priority skills for Language Arts. According to his fourth grade teacher, Eduard was reading on a first grade level in the Ginn basal reading series. My

own informal reading diagnosis indicated that his oral and silent reading were approximately second grade level. Eduard's listening comprehension, the ability to comprehend text read to him, indicated that he could comprehend material two years above his oral and silent reading levels. This suggested that Eduard could profit from orally presented material.

Eduard was reluctant to read aloud and the books he selected to read independently were easy picture books, at approximately the first grade level. He seldom engaged fully in reading during sustained silent reading periods, choosing instead to draw while pretending to read.

Writing

Eduard's writing competency was very limited. He could dictate a story as part of a language-experience activity. But on his own, he would write only a few words at the most. On August 26, the first day of school, I asked the students to write me a letter about anything. Eduard wrote only six words:

I fell Happy that school stArs.

Eduard's writing was clearly below what an average fifth-grade student would be expected to produce. In comparison, another child in my class who was performing on grade level wrote a letter of approximately 20 lines, with complex sentences, interesting vocabulary and clear organization.

Eduard did not consider himself a writer. When asked to write, he spent his time staring at his blank paper or drawing while pretending to write. Other times he played with small objects from his desk, or looked at baseball cards. I continued to observe and encourage Eduard. Each time I approached his desk he had a smile on his face and he told me that he was going to write. My instincts told me that Eduard wanted to write but he believed that he could not. Eduard needed an instructional approach that would scaffold his transition from orality to literacy and convince him that he could become a reader and writer. I believed that retelling would provide the verbal practice and the linguistic reservoir from which Eduard could begin to develop his literacy skills.

Eduard's first attempt at retelling was an oral to written retelling in September. When asked to write as much as he could recall about the Sea Serpent story that I had read aloud, Eduard produced instead a drawing retelling. It is important to note that his drawing accurately reflected the author's description of the sea serpent and the bloody waters.

Figure 1. Drawing Retelling of the "Sea Serpent."

Figure 1. Drawing Retelling of the "Sea Serpent."

This diagnostic retelling was followed by daily oral retelling practice of narrative and expository text to help Eduard make the transition to written retellings. Eduard's oral retellings improved with practice and he made a very impressive transition to written retellings as the year progressed. Eduard especially enjoyed retelling Guam legends. His favorite was "The Legend of Gadao." The following is an account of Eduard's retelling experience with this legend in the month of February.

"Come to the rug, students, while I read the Legend of Gadao, Chief of Inarajan village," I beckoned. Eduard sat wide-eyed as I displayed the illustrations of Gadao: Gadao thrusting his spear into the angry shark. Gadao swimming around the island of Guam fifty times without resting. Gadao smashing a coconut into pieces in one thrust with bare hands. Gadao leveling the tallest mountain on Guam. I watched the faces of my 28 students as I read. Eduard was right up front, hanging on to my every word. At the end of the legend, they retold it in small groups. When I asked for a volunteer to retell it to the whole class, Eduard immediately raised his hand. He gave an excellent oral retelling that reflected comprehension of the legend.

When the students returned to their desks to write, Eduard went straight to work. No looking about, no drawing of pictures, no fidgeting with small objects in his desk. He worked hard at his writing and produced the following written retelling:

This is MY Story About Chief GADAO

Long long time there lived a mand named GADAO Who became to be the chief of the southern end of the island. Then one cheerful day GADAO decided to go fishing with some friends. So when they finished filling there baskets they becan to go to the shore. But when they were toward the shore en ugly giant shark came. Then GADAO took his spear and threwit to the ugly shark. They they all whent back to the village. So the other men decided that he should be the chief of The village.

THE END

(February, oral to written retelling of Chief Cadao, with oral practice)

That Eduard felt a sense of ownership in his writing was obvious in his title: This is My Story About Chief Gadao. Although he did not retell the entire story, Eduard's written retelling shows a very accurate understanding of the first part of the legend. He vividly described the events of Gadao's day, using descriptive phrases such as "one cheerful day" and an "ugly giant shark" from the original text.

Eduard excitedly typed his retelling into the word processor. I watched as he tore the sheets from the printer to see the finished "masterpiece." He proudly read his Legend of Gadao to our class and volunteered to read it to other classes, as well.

As the year progressed, I noticed further changes in Eduard. These changes were evident in his comprehension of text, in his improvement in the writing process, and in his attitude toward literacy.

Comprehension and Writing Competency

In addition to increased self-confidence, it is interesting to note Eduard's progress in comprehension of text read aloud to him, comprehension of text read silently, and writing competency. These improvements can best be seen in comparison with earlier writings. The following are samples of Eduard's retellings from the beginning through the end of the school year.

Narrative Text. The first piece of writing in September is an attempt at a written retelling of the myth about Medusa. I asked Eduard to listen carefully to the myth as I read it aloud and to try and remember as much as he could because he would be asked to write a retelling of it. He wrote only nine words, mentioning the main characters and the setting.

MEDUSA

Medusa and Heo sisters whr sleeping in the Hloe

(September, first oral to written retelling of "Medusa", without oral practice)

Transcribed it says: Medusa and her sisters were sleeping in the hole. Notice the invented spelling: heo for her, Hloe for hole, and whr for were. The sentence has no ending punctuation.

The following retelling was written in March. I read the same myth about Medusa and asked the students to practice retelling in small groups, then write their individual retellings.

> Once upon a time their live three sisters. But one of them was called Medusa. There were vere gfel. Medusa and her three sisters live in a cave. So one day Meduasa wered a tres and then she went out to treck the mens. (March, second oral to written retelling of "Medusa ", with oral practice)

Eduard understood that there were three evil sisters who lived in a cave. Notice his

reference to the dress Medusa wore to trick the men. In the original story, Medusa "disguised herself by wearing a hooded cloak and tricked men into looking at her unaware." Eduard retold key elements of the plot and included a fair degree of character description. The retelling also shows appropriate use of capitalization and ending punctuation, paragraph indentation, and use of a right and left margin. Notice, also, the change in spelling from "whr" (were) in the first retelling to the correct "were" in the second retelling.

The following is a retelling about the Sea Serpent completed in March. It is the same story I had asked Eduard to listen to in September. He was able to give only a drawing retelling of it at that time.

THE Sea Serpent

In 1734 years ago a sea serpent wasbein faud in the phast fieu years ago a yiun laitie discofer a sea serpent. In that last sentury the yiun laitie called up the ARMY. So the ARMY was en apol to come on time. So the ARMY shot the sea serpent. Then it sanck down like a rocke. Wen the sea serpent was bein faud the water was caferd with bloed. But in the world wore tow the sea serpent a supemerin was bein distroed by the sea serpent. The sea serpent was colord darck brown. But the hede like a hours. But the sea serpent did not have one color only it had darck brown and wite color under the necke. So the sea serpent was never bein faud. In the bast fieu years ago.

THE END

(March, oral to written retelling of the "Sea Serpent",with oral practice)

In Eduard's retelling, he mentioned World War II and wrote that the army had shot the serpent. Although this was not the case (the monster had actually been shot by crew members of a Norwegian ship), he understood that the serpent had been attacked. Notice that he accurately described the bloody water and retold that the serpent sank like a rock. Eduard wrote a graphic description of the serpent: "The sea serpent was colored dark brown. But the head was like a horse. But the sea serpent did not have one color only it had dark brown and white color under the neck." Eduard accurately concluded the story by stating that the sea serpent has never been found.

There is obvious improvement in the fluency of Eduard's writing composition. His retelling reflected a basic comprehension of the story as evidenced by inclusion of several main events of the story. In addition, he had enriched his vocabulary, developed a sense of the story structure, the beginning, the middle, and the end, and he wrote more than half of a page. The word spellings are generally phonetic and transitional, however, he has correctly spelled a number of words.

Eduard wrote the following piece in May. It was a written retelling without practice in oral retelling of the text. I asked the class to read the story and then to retell it in writing. This type of retelling, without the oral practice, is used with learners who have some degree of control over reading and writing. The original story is a short story recommended for retelling by Brown and Cambourne (1987). In the original text, the writer tells of a cold harsh night with a strong wind blowing furiously throughout the alleys. The wind tossed up

leaves and litter in the silence of the night. The silence was suddenly broken by a clash of garbage tins. A shadow emerged and a man stumbled into sight. As he huddled in a corner of the alley, the man slowly raised a syringe and pierced his skin. The drugs filled his body as he walked along the graffiti marked wall. The writer describes the eerie scene as follows (Brown & Cambourne, 1987):

> The night was long and the night was cold but the man fought for his life. Death was close and the rain pelted down on the garbage tins. The man crawled across the alley for awhile. The rain stopped and the man slowly stopped breathing.

The following is Eduard's retelling:

> DEATH ALLEY
>
> One harsh night. The wind bluw thruw the live, the tin cans rolld to the trees and strees. The reash can tumdold and make scweecky noes. But all the sutund a shatl cuferd the livs. So the man hide, when another man came then the took his neetl of alcual and stabed the man with the needl. Then the man lide down in the street. But the man was con.
>
> THE END

(May, written to written retelling of "Death Alley", without oral practice)

Eduard's retelling shows development in syntax complexity and descriptive language. He also tells a complete story which reflects knowledge of story structure. There is an indication that Eduard had some difficulty making inferences from the text. He wrote that the man had been stabbed with a needle by another man. He may have inferred this from the original text, "The night was long and the night was cold but the man fought for his life." Eduard thought that the drug addict had fought with another man and it had resulted in the stabbing. Furthermore, Eduard had recently engaged in an oral to written expository retelling about the drug alcohol. Perhaps he had transferred his knowledge about what he had learned from his alcohol retelling to this Death Alley story. Eduard had learned that alcohol is a dangerous drug. He may have thought that because alcohol is a drug, then it too, could be injected with a syringe.

Eduard had internalized the rich vocabulary and use of words. When asked to describe a "harsh night" and a "shadow covering the leaves," he responded, "Harsh means a bad night. It was cold. The shadow makes the leaves dark."

In June, the last month of school, Eduard retold a fairy tale, "The Frog Prince" (Brown & Cambourne, 1987). I read the fairy tale aloud and Eduard then read it silently. He followed this with oral retelling practice with a friend before producing the final written retelling. The following is Eduard's retelling:

> The Frog Prince
>
> Once upon a time there livt a king who had three beutful toters, but the younces

was the beutyful of then all! But one day yun princes went out into the yard she tock her vaferet toy, but her vaferet toy was a golden ball. But when she thru it up so hih and she cuot it but it slept out of her han and fele in the big pount. then cride and she saide how am I going to ever get my golden ball. But wile she was criying a slimy frog upeard and the princes saide will you get my golden ball saide the princes yes saide the frog. But you must prumiss me something. Then the princes saide what is that? said the princes. So the frog ansode he said-I will eat from your plate and tringk from your cup and sleep with you in your bed. So the princes said, Only if you get my golden ball, then the frog jumpt in to the pund and got the ball and gavet to the yung princes. But the princes inside. And she forgot all about the prumiss she had made with the frog. When it was time for dinner a noies cam. shbleesh shblash shbleesh shblash nock nock on the door the beutyful princes opent the door, but it was the frog. But the beutyful princes whant to slam the door on the frogs own vace. So she slamd the door on the frogs. But the king hurd all the comollshon, then the king calld his yung douter. And so the king saide what is rung. Then the yung princes tald the King. But the King saide if you make a prumiss you must allways keep et. So the princes opent the dour then the frog jumpt up and on to the chere and aet from her plaet and tranck from her cup. But when it was time for bedtime

(June, oral and written to written retelling of the "Frog Prince",with oral practice)

Eduard did not finish his written retelling due to time constraints that morning. However, when I asked him how the tale had ended, he explained how the frog had changed into a handsome prince after being picked up and thrown by the princess. He talked about the witch's curse, and how the young princess broke the spell, and that the prince and the princess lived happily ever after.

A comparison of the original text with Eduard's retelling showed that he comprehended the tale. Eduard retold the tale, reproducing in various degrees of completeness, the events of the story. Furthermore, he understood the story structure of a fairytale. Notice the familiar beginning: Once upon a time there lived a king . . .". Eduard obviously understood that the youngest daughter was the "fairest of them all"; he wrote "beutyful of them all" and that her yard was actually her garden. Indeed, her favorite toy was the golden ball. Eduard's retelling used much of the author's rich vocabulary and special way with words. Like the author, Eduard wrote, "I will eat from your plate and drink from your cup" as opposed to, "I will eat off your plate and drink out of your cup."

It is important to note the spelling of some of the words in Eduard's written retelling of the "Frog Prince" the further along he got into his writing. In the beginning of the retelling he wrote beutful for beautiful. In his second attempt he added a "y" to make it beutyful. In the same retelling he changed toter (daughter) to douter. Yun (young) changed to yung and pount (pond) to pund. The changes in these spellings showed Eduard's developing spelling skills. Each new attempt was a closer match to the correct spelling.

Eduard has acquired features of the original text: the author's colorful, descriptive words and

phrases, sentence and story structure, and the mechanics of writing such as ending punctuation marks and spelling. Brown and Cambourne (1987) describe this internalization of text features as linguistic spillover. Smith (1988) calls it "acquiring the code" (p. 25).

Expository Text. In October Eduard wrote a written to written retelling about the importance of our physical needs. I had asked the class to read a short section in our health text and then to practice retelling the text with a friend. I told them to try to remember everything they could about the text because they would be asked to retell it in writing.

> do you no some needs are easy to no that some need aremore puzzling. But some of your needs are the mosst imnporten thing. and your needs can get healthy. but come time you can't get healhy, if you did no you need food.
>
> (October, first written to written retelling about physical needs, with oral practice).

Aside from his sentence, "But some of your needs are the most important thing," Eduard's retelling does not make much sense.

Compare that retelling to a second written retelling of the same text that Eduard did in May. The students were given the same instructions as they had for the first retelling.

> Phisical needs are what your body needs to stay alive. The things you need to keep your body helthy is by eating the right food. But the most inbortined thing that you need is air and water. But there are also some other thing you need to do to keep you body helthy. To keep your body helthy is by exsersiceing and jowking.
>
> (May, second written to written retelling about physical needs, with oral practice).

His retelling was easy to read and understand this time. Eduard's retelling reflected comprehension of the text. He understood the importance of satisfying our physical needs.

The length of Eduard's written retellings improved over the school year. A comparison of the lengths of his retellings is shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Written Retellings

Month	Title	Form of Retelling	Word Count
Narrative Text			
September	Sea Serpent 1	Drawing Retelling	0
September	Medusa 1	Oral to Written	9
February	Chief Gadao	Oral to Written	95
March	Medusa 2	Oral to Written	44
March	Sea Serpent 2	Oral to Written	136
May	Death Alley	Written to Written	70
June	Frog Prince	Oral & Written to Written	334
Expository Text			
October	Phys. Needs 1	Written to Written	45
May	Phys. Needs 2	Written to Written	63

Attitude Toward Literacy

In February, I asked for volunteers to present their writing portfolios at the Guam Council International Reading Association meeting at the Hotel Nikko. Eduard asked to join the group and worked diligently to complete his final copies of written retellings to include in his portfolio. Eduard's presentation on February 6 at the Hotel Nikko was a success. He responded to questions and displayed samples of his work to showcase his growth in writing. Eduard read his Legend of Gadao with confidence and pride. Afterward, he proudly accepted compliments about his performance.

Eduard's portfolio included a number of written retellings by the end of March. His confidence in himself as a reader and writer was evident in a letter he wrote to me that month.

> Dear Miss Mits
>
> I am happy to no how to read and writ. And becous of that I wuold like to thankyou to make me how to writ.

When I asked Eduard how he felt about his reading and writing he said: "I don't have to be worried anymore. Because I can do almost everything like reading and writing."

In the beginning of May, Eduard volunteered for a part in our Reader's Theater performance of Maurice Sendak's book "Where the Wild Things Are (1963)." After several practices, he was able to read his part well, and soon discarded the script because he had memorized the words. He was performing the text and he performed it well, both during rehearsal and the final presentation for an audience of his peers.

Final Reflection

Retelling had played a crucial role in Eduard's literacy development during the nine months of his fifth grade year. As the school year came to a close, I reflected on the changes in Eduard. Gone was the Eduard who hid his blank paper from others and pretended to write. Gone was the Eduard who selected only easy picture books from the class libraries. Eduard

had become a willing reader and writer who did not hesitate to write stories, letters to friends, and other pieces of work. He was now able to read books at a fourth grade level. During independent reading time, his selections were no longer limited to picture books. His favorite trade book was Phantom of the Opera by Gaston Leroux, adapted by Kate McCullan (1989). During classroom performances of Readers Theater, Eduard was right up there with the rest of his peers, making print come alive through performing text. Eduard had become a willing and able participant in the literate community.

Eduard's story is significant because it serves as an example of how the literacy development of a student can be dramatically improved by bridging the gap between the school and the child's culture through the use of a culturally responsive strategy. Oral retelling is consistent with "tuttunap", the Chuukese tradition of storytelling. Both involve interaction between adults and children. Chuukese children hear and retell stories passed down from their elders. In the oral to oral form of the retelling strategy, the teacher reads aloud and the children retell the text.

In the classroom, retelling with a partner or in small groups builds on another strength of Micronesian students. It is reflective of their spirit of cooperativeness and collaboration. This collaborative form of retelling, however, is not commonly practiced in Western classrooms. Students usually retell to the teacher or class and then produce a written retelling without the benefit of practice in small groups. Small group retelling provides students with a collaborative setting to practice verbal discourse and recall of text. In this context, retelling is a social means of developing literacy (Rosenblatt, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978) that is compatible with Micronesian culture. It is a vehicle for the development of reading and writing skills because written language draws on competence in oral language and children use each system to support the other (Goodman, 1986). Eduard's story documents the effectiveness of retelling as a scaffold in the literacy acquisition of a Micronesian child and provides educators with a powerful strategy to facilitate literacy learning for all Micronesian students.

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